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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [AF](#) [IR](#) [PK](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: GUL URGES TEHRAN NOT TO MISS "GOOD OPPORTUNITY"

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

GUL-AHAMADINEJAD/GUL-KHAMENEI BILATS  
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¶1. (C) MFA Deputy DG for South Asia Babur Hizlan gave us a readout March 13 on President Gul's participation in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit in Tehran, March 10-11, where he met bilaterally with Iranian President Ahmadinejad and, accompanied by Ahmadinejad, with Supreme Leader Khamenei. Deputy U/S Sinirlioglu, PM Foreign Policy Advisor Davutoglu, and Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Turkoglu were with Gul in the bilaterals. FM Babacan was in Tehran two days before Gul for the Ministerial meeting, but Hizlan said he focused on Summit matters. According to Hizlan, Gul gave the Iranians a full picture of what Turkey sees -- referring to the willingness of the U.S. to engage Iran -- as "a good opportunity for the world," and urged Iran not to miss it. The Iranians were more receptive than in previous visits and anxious to see the outcome of the U.S. policy review on Iran. The Iranians, said Hizlan, realize that "things are changing," even as they continue to insist that words don't count, only deeds. A Turkish mediating role between the U.S. and Iran was not discussed, according to Hizlan; Ahmadinejad dismissed in the press any such role for Turkey, responding, perhaps, to previous statements by PM Erdogan that Iran had requested this from Turkey and that Turkey was ready.

¶2. (C) Hizlan informed us that MFA will soon deliver to us a paper with recommendations on Iran, similar to the paper it prepared in support of our Afghanistan/Pakistan policy review. The paper will include Turkish impressions of the Iranian domestic political scene. Turkey's view is that any direct U.S. engagement prior to June presidential elections could disturb an outcome that might be more favorable to all of us. Hizlan conceded that Ahmadinejad appears to have the upper hand in that race; outside of north Tehran, the average citizen still appears to support him and he continues to exploit state resources to gain voter allegiance. Hizlan noted that President Khatami might throw his support to reformist former PM Musavi in the presidential race. Khatami is an Alliance of Civilizations (AOC) High-level Group Member and is invited to the AOC Forum in Istanbul, beginning April ¶6. However, Khatami has not yet notified Turkey of his attendance; Hizlan suggested he might not join if he plans to remain in the presidential race.

NO SUBSTANCE FROM ECO SUMMIT;

¶3. (C) The ECO Summit itself was unremarkable and badly organized, according to Hizlan. Hizlan showed little enthusiasm for ECO, describing it as a talk shop. Iran, a founding member of ECO, has failed to ratify the 2003 ECO Trade Agreement and thus continues to block the one area where ECO could do some good, especially in the current economic climate. (NOTE: Trade among ECO states is limited -- about six percent of the bloc's total trade. The agreement would simply extend most favored nation treatment throughout the ECO area. END NOTE.) Gul missed the opportunity to meet bilaterally with the Presidents of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan as a result of the ECO meetings running long. He did, however, meet bilaterally with Azerbaijani President Aliyev (Hizlan had no details), Afghan President Karzai, and Pakistani President Zardari. Karzai reportedly asked Turkey to organize another trilateral summit with Pakistan; Zardari did not oppose this. Hizlan said Turkey could do it, but he did not convey much enthusiasm.

AFGHANISTAN/DOSTUM

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¶4. (S) Hizlan said the Turks were providing "lavish" conditions to Dostum in an effort to ensure he remains in Turkey. As always, Hizlan underscored that there is no set time for his remaining here. They are trying their best to encourage him to stay, but "he is a free man" and can go back anytime. There was no indication, however, that Dostum intended to do so before August 20 elections. Hizlan noted

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Turkey's support for Karzai's efforts to engage opposition forces, like Gulbuddin Hekmatayar, if these efforts are GOA-led and supported. Turkey is prepared to be helpful on national reconciliation efforts. Hizlan noted that MFA Deputy U/S Sinirlioglu and DG Dirioz are Turkey's chief points of contact on Pakistan/Afghanistan policy; Turkey has no plans to appoint a special representative.

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Jeffrey